

dated to the Civil War regarding black/white interaction in the city. That teacher had been in Wilmington during the riot and she told Beam where 23 murders had occurred and that fires had burned along streets that she walked and that many families still in the city had to run for their lives during the riot. Because of such simmering undercurrents, Beam sensed the “smell of fear” in Wilmington. Blacks related horrors of 1898 to her such as stories of hiding in marshes and swamps where men pretended to be cypress trees as they hid from bloodhounds that were sent into woods to find them. One family recounted burying their silver and never recovered it. Beam learned to be wary of whites and blacks would not speak to her in the street to protect both her and themselves lest someone would perceive that a white woman was endangered or that she fraternized with African American men.<sup>80</sup> Beam’s “education” into black/white roles and relationships was undoubtedly repeated throughout the city for newcomers of all races, ages, and occupations.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Beam, *He Called Them by the Lightning*, 28.

<sup>81</sup> Another story of how the violence of 1898 affected the African American community has come from the family history of Gwendolyn Cottman. Cottman’s family genealogy, *Just Us*, details her family’s lives over several generations. Dispersed within the pages is an underlying story of how her family’s collective memory of 1898 affected how children were reared, how family history was told, and how children viewed elderly members of the community who recalled the horrors of 1898. An interesting topic appeared in Cottman’s work—the existence of vacant homes in Brooklyn. Cottman never knew why the homes were vacant but research into several homes indicated in her work in the neighborhood around North Tenth/McRae/North Ninth/North Eighth Streets is insightful. A study of the block book, census, Sanborn maps, and tax lists for blocks 327, 310, and 297, blocks referenced by Cottman, show that in the 1920s there were several properties owned by blacks but were considered “vacant and open.” It is unclear why some people owned homes in the city but yet left them fully furnished, unlocked and open

As for the white narrative of the violence and coup, Wilmingtonians suggested that their actions had been necessary to restore order to the city. In the years that followed, the city attempted to attract new businesses and capital in order to diversify its economy according to the New South model. The 1900 city directory boasted that the city’s population had grown since 1897: “In view of the vicissitudes through which Wilmington has passed since our last publication, this gain is not only gratifying but surprising.”<sup>82</sup> In this veiled reference to the violence, the directory compilers boasted about the city’s ability to grow despite the troubles of Negro rule and the violence necessary to restore order. In 1902, the city’s Chamber of Commerce produced a pamphlet designed to attract outside capital. The pamphlet heralded that it was not the “mission in these pages to devote any space to details connected with the early history of Wilmington. Our business is not with the past, but with the present.”<sup>83</sup> Realizing the potential hazard of referencing the riot to potential investors, the organization simply chose to ignore it. The clearest allusion to the violence came in a discussion of the city’s attributes which favored manufacturing: “The local government is now based upon strict ideas of economy consistent with safe and secure progress.” Three years later, the local press

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for years. Cottman points out that these homes were later torn down by the city. More research is needed to understand how or why some African American property owners such as Timon Council maintained ownership of property in the city but lived in other parts of the state. Council owned property at 1107 N. Ninth Street in the 1920s but lived in Cumberland County. Gwendolyn Cottman, *Just Us* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, Inc., 2002), 62-64, 75-76, 81-87, 222; 1925 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Wilmington; 1920 and 1930 census.

<sup>82</sup> Wilmington City Directory, 1900, n.p.

<sup>83</sup> *Wilmington Up-to-Date: The Metropolis of North Carolina Graphically Portrayed* (Wilmington: W.L. De Rossett, 1902), n.p.